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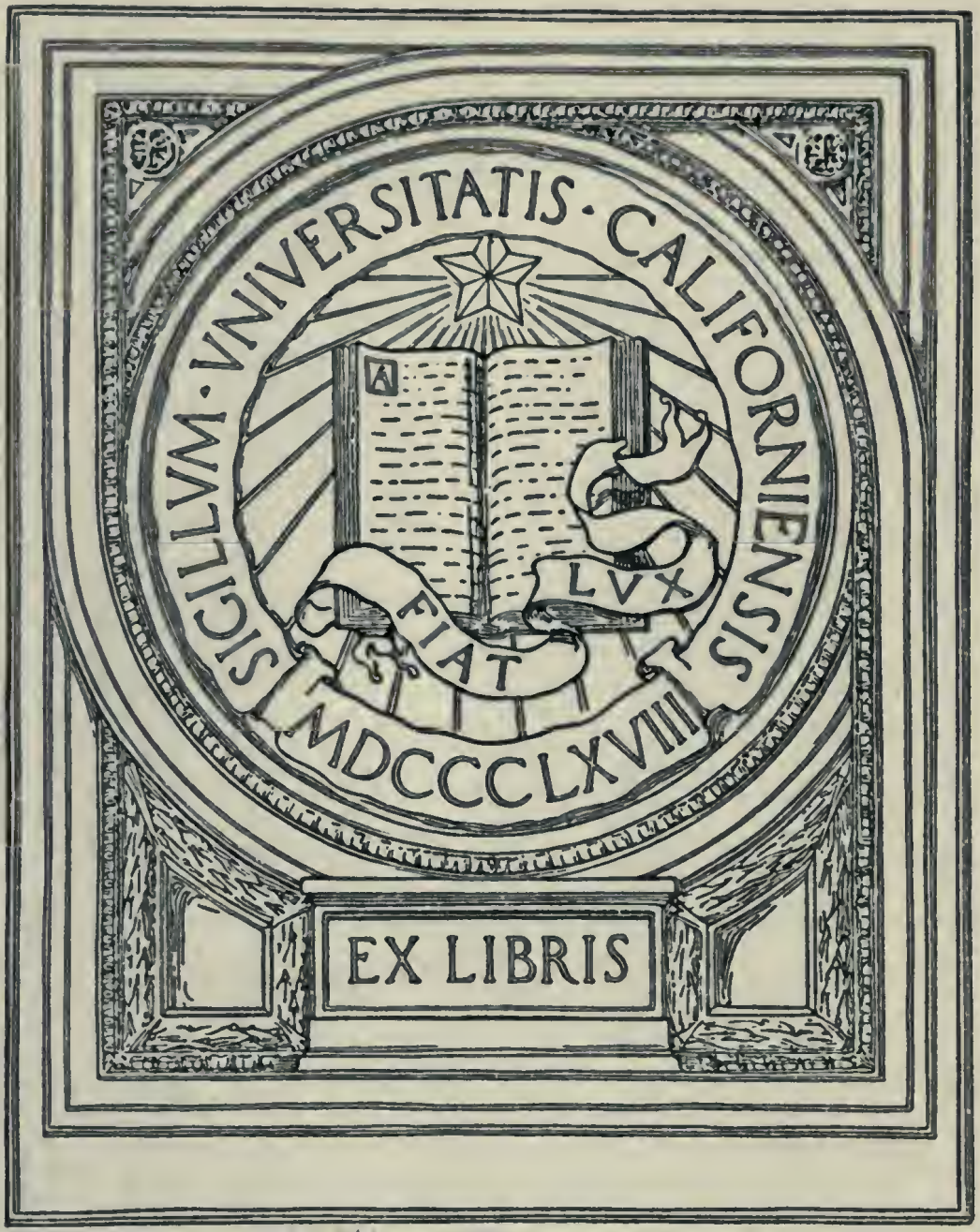

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OLD WORLD BALLADS

'AN' THERE I DID SEE SKELETONS—' (*Page* 31)

OLD WORLD BALLADS

BY

PADRIC GREGORY

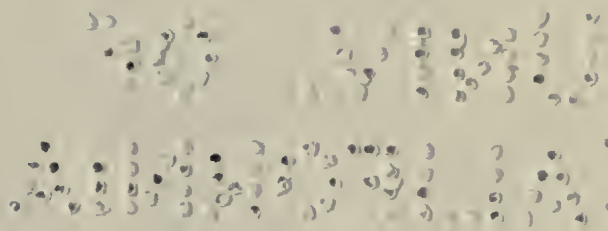
WITH FRONTISPIECE BY NORMAN KEENE

LONDON

DAVID NUTT

17 GRAPE STREET, NEW OXFORD STREET, W.C.

1913



TO

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

FOR KINDLY CRITICISM

956793

BY PADRIC GREGORY

THE ULSTER FOLK — Paper 1*s.* net.

OLD WORLD BALLADS — Cloth 2*s.* net.

LONDON: DAVID NUTT

17 GRAPE STREET, NEW OXFORD STREET, W.C.

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(After the manner of the old Border Ballads)

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THANKS

THE ballads in this volume, with the exception of *The Ballad of Master Fox*, have been published before; those relating to the Irish Rebellion appeared in 'Irish Freedom' (Dublin). Permission to reprint has been obtained, and is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

PADRIC GREGORY.

December 1912.

SCOTCH BALLADS

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE BALLAD OF MASTER FOX

This ballad is based on the story 'written down from memory' by Blakeway, and contributed by him to Malone's 'Variorum Shakespeare' (1821), Vol. vii. pp. 163–165, in elucidation of Benedick's speech in 'Much Ado About Nothing,' Act I., Scene I. :—'Like the old tale, my lord: it is not so, nor 'twas not so, but indeed God forbid it should be so.'

Blakeway tells us that this is evidently an allusion to the tale of *Master Fox*; which, he explains, 'Shakespeare may have heard, as I have, related by a great-aunt in childhood.'

The story belongs to the Bluebeard class, and may be compared with *Bloudie Jacke of Shrewsbury* in the 'Ingoldsby Legends'; with the well-known children's

story *The Robber-Bridegroom*; or with the story of *Captain Murderer*, given in Dickens' amusing article *Nurses' Stories*. From the notes to Grimm's 'Fairy Tales,' Vol. ii. pp. 164–167, edn. 1864, it would appear that the same tale is to be found in Danish and Hungarian.

On the version contributed to Malone's Edition, Dyce remarks that it 'may really be a modernised version of the old tale alluded to by Shakespeare: but Blakeway was not aware that one of the circumstances in the good lady's narrative is borrowed from Spenser's description of what Britomart saw in the Castle of Busyrane.'

Riding up to the Castle of Busirane, Britomart and Sir Scudamore dismount from their horses. They find neither a warder nor even a gate to bar their entry, but within the porch a blazing fire, mixed with smoke and sulphur, which so overpowers their senses with horror that they are forced instantly to retire. Britomart, however, will not abandon the adventure; throwing her shield before

her face, and pointing her sword forward, she boldly marches up to and assails the flame.

'. . . the which eftsoons gave place,
And did itself divide with equal space,
That through she passed; as a thunder-bolt
Pierceth the yielding air, and doth displace
The soaring clouds into sad showers ymolt.' [1]

When Sir Scudamore attempts to follow her, he finds that he cannot pass, and is driven back scorched and burnt. Britomart has entered—

'The utmost room, and passed the fore-most door;
The utmost room abounding with all precious store:'

and after gazing on the splendid scene around her, she looks back and perceives written over the door the words *Be Bold.*

[1] Ymolt = molten melted.

She cannot make out what the inscription may mean; but, 'no whit thereby discouraged,' advances boldly into the next room.

More fairer than the former was that room,
And richlier, by many parts, arrayed;'

Britomart marvels greatly that all this while no living thing has appeared. Then, as she looks around, she beholds again the words *Be Bold*, *Be Bold*, written over every door; till at last, at the upper end of the room in which she is standing she discovers one iron door on which is written *Be not too bold*.[1]

PADRIC GREGORY.

[1] Spenser: 'The Faërie Queene.'—Book III. Canto XI. Stanzas 50–54.

THE BALLAD OF MASTER FOX

I

O DOON intae the green countrie
The Ladie Mary's gang awa',
Far frae her father an' mither dear,
Wi' her gude brithers twa.

II

An' 'tis her delight, frae morn till night,
In the fair days o' spring,
Tae roam aboot the green wildwoods
An' hear the blithe birds sing.

III

An' they hadna bided there ae week
Ae week but barely three,
When ane morn tae their yett [1] there rade
Ae mudie man,[2] a' bright o' blee ; [3]

[1] Yett = gate.
[2] Ae mudie man = a stalwart man.
[3] Bright o' blee = of fair complexion.

IV

An' speired he o' the proud porter :
'Whaur doth thy ladie bide,
In yon heich touir, or in her bouir,
Or in the woodlands wide ? '

V

An' up an' spak' the proud porter—
'My ladie here betimes doth bide,
But she's up an' awa', wi' her brithers twa,
Intae the woodlands wide.'

VI

'Syne, loon ! ca' oot the servin' men,
An' gar them tak' my steed frae me ;
An' I will rest my weary banes
Till they come in frae the green countrie.'

VII

They've ta'en awa' his berry-brown steed,
They've led him tae the banquet ha',
Whaur trophies o' the chase, an' spears,
An' braid-swords hang on every wa'.

VIII

An' frae his middle they've ta'en his sword,
An' frae his heid his bonnet fine,
An' frae his showders his lang black cloak,
An' fetched him in ae bowl o' wine.

IX

An' he hadna sate in the ha' an hour,
An hour but barely three,
When the Ladie Mary she come hame
A' frae the green countrie.

X

An' lowlie loutit [1] the fair ladie,
Tae him wha sate wi'in her ha',
Whaur trophies o' the chase, an' spears,
An' braid-swords hang on every wa'.

XI

'God save ye, gentel sir!' she said,
'God save ye, fair ladie!' said he,
'Frae my ain ha' this morn I've hied
Tae welcome ye tae our countrie.'

[1] Lowlie loutit = lowly bowed.

XII

She walkit stately as ae queen,
  Her e'en were bright as crystal stane,
Her hair it shinkled [1] like threeds o' gowd,
  Her teeth like royal-bane.[2]

XIII

Her brow was as the mountain snaw,
  Her lips were o' red rosie hue,
Her breath as sweet as paley posies
  Drappin' early mornin' dew;

XIV

Her cheeks were as the lily white,
  Her throat as white as white could be,
'Christ's Blood!' the young man cried aloud,
  'Sic comeliness I ne'er did see!'

XV

He's ta'en her by the grass-green sleeve,
  An' by the milk-white hand,
An' gazin' on her beauty
  For owre lang he did stand.

[1] Shinkled = shone.
[2] Royal-bane = ivory.

XVI

An' when her brithers twa come in
He greeted them wi' hearty cheer,
An' says : 'I hope ye'll bide near me
Fu' monys ae day an' year.'

XVII

'We'll hunt wi' hawk, we'll hunt wi' hound,
We'll chase the stag, an' slay the hind,
I'll gar ye three forget tae mane [1]
Owre them ye left in the toon behind.'

XVIII

An' the brithers twa were glad tae meet
Ae neighbour laird, sae free an' fair,
An' they gard him stay, the lang lang day,
I wot tae feast on their finest fare.

XIX

An' the Ladie Mary hied hersel'
Awa' tae kaim her gowden hair,
Tae cleade hersel' in comely claithes,
An' a' her finery rare.

[1] Mane = moan ; fret or worry.

XX

She's putten on ae satin goun
  Wi' sleeves o' crimson fair tae see,
Ae petticoat o' gay sendall [1]
  Wi' gowd embroidered gorgeouslie,

XXI

Ae girdle she's put round her waist—
  Pearl-decked, gie gallant tae the e'e,
An' frae it hangs pin-case, an' purse,
  An' wee penknife aboon her knee.

XXII

An' when her woman snood [2] her hair,
  An' busked [3] her arms wi' siller bands,
Her finery did but seem tae mak'
  More fair her lily face an' hands.

XXIII

An' when she steppit doon the stair
  That led intae the banquet-ha'
Her brightness seemed tae pale the light
  O' torches set in every wa'.

[1] Sendall = a thin silk.
[2] Snood = a fillet by which a woman's hair is confined.
[3] Busked = dressed; decorated.

XXIV

She sat hersel' doon tae the board
Took bite an' sup aboon an hour,
An' mony's ae sweet sang lilted them,
Syne hied hersel' back tae her bouir.

XXV

But Master Fox an' her brithers twa
They feasted, frae the sun gaed doon,
An' drunk great bowls o' blude-red wine
Till cock-crows chased the ghostlie moon.

XXVI

An' after this, fu' monys ae day
The ladie an' the young men three,
Sported aboot the green wildwoods
Ae lovin' jocund companie.

XXVII

They hunted wi' hawk, they hunted wi' hound,
They chased the stag, they slew the hind,
An' Master Fox gard them forget
Their gudefolk left in the toon behind.

XXVIII

The brithers were glad o' the companie
O' ae neighbour laird sae free an' fair,
An' monys ae time they feasted him,
The lang lang day on their finest fare.

XXIX

An' monys ae night in the banquet-ha'
They sate, frae the hour the sun gaed doon,
An' drunk great bowls o' blude-red wine
Till cock-crows chased the ghostlie moon.

XXX

An' monys ae time would Master Fox
Spier Ladie Mary that she would ca'
That he could show her a' his lands,
An' a' the treasures o' his ha'.

XXXI

Intae her ear he'd spak' fu' laigh:
'Come owre the morn an' see my ha',
Come owre, bot fail![1] but come your lane,
An' dinna bring your brithers twa!'

[1] Come owre, bot fail! = Come over, without fail!

XXXII

But she would then say untae him :
'What is it ye hae in your ha'
That ye bid me tae come my lane,
An' na tae bring my brithers twa ? '

XXXIII

But he would answer her an' say—
Wi' na ae blink [1] in her bright e'e—
'O dinna tell your brithers twa,
Come owre your lane an' ye sall see ! '

XXXIV

An' ane aire morn her brithers rade
Far thro' the woods baith by their lane ;
She watched them frae the castel's touir,
Until they baith were gane ;
Syne slippit oot the ha's back-yett,
An' loupit the fields her lane.

XXXV

She didna' tak' her auld nourice,
She didna tak' her servin' maid,
She didna tak' her little foot-page,
For she was bowd an' niver flaid.[2]

[1] Wi' na ae blink = without a look.
[2] Flaid = afraid.

XXXVI

She's wandered doon the miry road,
An' owre the knowes [1] sae green,
She heard the throstle-cock an' jay,
An' laverock sing I ween,
An' ladie fairer than this ladie
I wot was never seen.

XXXVII

An' when she come intae the lands
Whaur Master Fox did bide—
There wasna porter at his yett
Nor servin' men inside,
So she's walkit up tae his ha' door,
An' the door was heich an' wide.

XXXVIII

She's walkit tae the aiken door
An' tirlit at the pin,
But the young laird Fox he didna come
A' for tae let her in;

[1] Knowes = knolls; hillocks.

XXXIX

An' sae she opened the door hersel'—
The door sae heigh an' wide—
An' when that she had opened it
She saw anither inside.

XL

An' owre this door writ giely well
These words she did behauld—
They gard the flesh o' her bodie creep—
Be bold but not too bold.

XLI

But she's gang intae the mirk toom ha' [1]
An' there she did behauld—
Writ aboon the stey stane stair [2]—
Be bold but not too bold.

XLII

But she's clam up the windin' stair
An' there she did behauld—
Writ giely owre the gallerie—
Be bold but not too bold.

[1] Mirk toom ha' = dark empty hall.
[2] Stey stane stair = steep stone stair.

XLIII

But she's gang on tae a chammer door
An' there she did behauld :
Be bold be bold but not too bold
Lest that your heart's blude should rin cold.

XLIV

An' though she hadna her auld nourice,
An' though she hadna her servin' maid,
An' though she hadna her little foot-page,
I wot she wasna flaid.

XLV

Wi' mickle dule [1] she's gane tae the door
An' tirlit at the pin,
At last she's got it opened wide
An' straight she's walkit in.

XLVI

An' there saw sic ae loathlie sight
She scant [2] could trew [3] her eyes,
Her face did thraw,[4] at what she saw,
An' she cried oot elrish [5] cries.

[1] Wi' mickle dule = with great foreboding.
[2] Scant = scarcely. [3] Trew = believe.
[4] Thraw = contort. [5] Elrish = unearthly.

XLVII

For there she did see skeletons!
I wot that there was three or mair,
An' tubs o' blude, an' four ladies—
New-slain—a' hangin' by their hair!

XLVIII

She's ca'ed upon the Haly Name,
An' on the Haly Trinitie,
An' doon the stey stane stairs she's rin
As fast as she could dri'e!

XLIX

An' as she scurrit doon the stair
Frae ae windae she did espie
Her neighbour laird, young Master Fox,
Comin' owre the fields—wi' ae young ladie.

L

An' the ladie didna walk by his side,
Nor yet ahin, nor yet afare,
But he did pu' her after him
Grippit by her lang black hair,—
An' the Ladie Marie, fu' o' fear,
Rin doon, an' hurked [1] below the stair.

[1] Hurked = crouched.

LI

An' then owre lang, wi' grunt an' mane,
Master Fox draggit in the young ladie,
An' cries : ' I've slain seven ladies fair—
The eight ane ye sall be ! '

LII

An' the fair ladie she's ca'ed oot
Fu' loudly on the Haly Name,
An' on the Haly Persons Three,
But help it never came.

LIII

In through the door he's draggit her,
A' by her lang black hair,
An' owre the stanes [1] he's draggit her
An' tae the windin' stair.

LIV

An' as he's pu'ed her up the stair—
Wi' mickle grunt an' mane—
A' at the stairway bannister [2]
She's clutched wi' might an' main ;

[1] Owre the stanes = over the flags of the hall.
[2] Bannister = balauster.

LV

But he's drawed oot his gude braid sword
An' swung it giely well,
An' he's hacked off the ladie's hand—
An' doon the stairs it fell,

LVI

Doon stairs the bludie hand it fell—
It was ae loathlie sight tae see—
An' the Ladie Mary's ta'en it up
An' fled as fast as she might flee

LVII

An' when she's gotten ootside the yett
She's slacked her shoon an' ran,
An' till she got on tae the road
I wis she never blan.[1]

LVIII

An' she's rin doon the miry road,
An' owre the knowes sae green,
An' heard nor jay, nor throstle-cock,
Nor laverock sing, I ween,
For fairer maid sae fu' o' fear
I wot was never seen.

[1] She never blan = she did not pause to take breath.

LIX

An' when she come tae her ain ha'
She steiked [1] hersel' wi'in her bouir,
An' hid the bludie hand awa'
Then lay abed fu' monys an hour.

LX

An' intae her come her auld nourice,
An' intae her come her servin' maid,
An' intae her come her little foot-page,
An' she did sweine ! an' they were flaid.

LXI

An' when her brithers twa rade hame
I wot they did pleen sair—
Tae ken their sister had ta'en her bed—
They were ae sorry pair.

LXII

But she hadna lain abed ae week,
Ae week but barely ane,
When she up an' spak' untae her maid :
'Go fetch my syde-claithes [2] in.'

[1] Steiked hersel' = shut herself in ; hid.
[2] Syde-claithes = long clothes ; house-clothes.

LXIII

An' when her woman had laced her claithes
She steppit doon intae the ha'
An' for tae see her wan nae mair
It giely pleased her brithers twa.

LXIV

An' she hadna been frae her bed ae day,
Ae day but barely twa,
When Master Fox, on his berry-brown steed,
Come brankin' [1] tae their ha'.

LXV

An' a' that day, an' monys ae day,
Ladie Mary an' the young men three,
Wandered owre the green wild woods
Ae lovin' jocund companie.

LXVI

The brithers were glad o' the companie
O' ae neighbour laird sae free an' fair,
An' monys ae day they gar'd him stay,
I wot tae feast on their finest fare,

[1] Brankin' = riding gallantly.

LXVII

An' monys ae night in the banquet-ha'
They sate, frae the hour the sun gaed doon,
An' drunk great bowls o' blude-red wine
Till cock-crows chased the ghostlie moon.

LXVIII

An' ane day—after Pentacost—
Tae their sister spak' the brithers twa:
'Back tae our father an' mither dear,
It's time that we were gang awa'.

LXIX

'But afare we gang we'll hae tae gi'e
Ae feast untae our neighbours a',
An' gar the gude lairds an' their ladies gay
Come sup in our bigly [1] banquet-ha'.'

LXX

Sae the Ladie Marie ca'ed her maids,
The brithers their gude wight [2] servin' men,
An' they bid them a', preen chammer an' ha',
As well as they can ken.

[1] Bigly = handsome; well-decorated.
[2] Wight = sturdy; strong.

LXXI

An' when the feast day it did come
I wot it was ae sight tae see,
For at their biddin' come a' the lairds
An' ladies o' the whole countee.

LXXII

An' the brithers hae tentit [1] a' the lairds,
An' Ladie Mary their ladies gay,
They feasted each ane giely well
A' through the lang lang day;
An' they hae danced, an' they hae sang,
Till I wot sair done were they.

LXXIII

An' they hae wearied o' the feast,
An' o' the dance e'er lang,
An' they hae wearied o' pipes an' lute,
An' hae wearied o' the sang—
When the Ladie Mary spiered: 'Wha'll tell
Ae tale o' right or wrang?

[1] Tentit = attended; looked after.

LXXIV

'Wha'll tell ae tale o' right or wrang ?
Wha'll tell ae tale o' witcherie ?
Or wha'll tell tales o' love or war
Tae this gay companie ? '

LXXV

An' tane laird tell't ae tale o' love,
An' tither ae tale o' war,
Master Fox tell't tales o' witcherie
Sic like they never heard afare.

LXXVI

Tane ladie tell't ae tale o' love,
An' tither ae tale o' war,
An' tither she tell't o' eerie freits [1]
Sic like they never heard afare.

LXXVII

An' syne they said : 'We hae tell't o' love,
O' war, o' freits, o' witcherie,
It's come your turn—sae now ye'll tell
Ae tale tae us, gude Ladie Mary ! '

[1] Freits = superstitious practices.

LXXVIII

But she was shent,[1] an' blushéd pink,
An' syne she blushéd red,
An' says: 'I canna tell ae tale—
But I'll tell ae dream instead.

LXXIX

'I dreamed ae waefu' dream yestre'en
That filled my heart wi' fear
An' gin ye listen untae me
Well scryed [2] my dream ye'll hear:

LXXX

'Our gude gay neighbour—Master Fox—
Aft spiered me owre tae see his ha',
Ane hunner times he bid me come—
But na tae bring my brithers twa;

LXXXI

'An' yestre'en when I lay abed
I dreamed that I gaed tae his ha'
An' didna tak' nor nourice, nor maid,
Nor page, nor these—my brithers twa.'

[1] Shent = ashamed; confused.
[2] Well scryed = well described; fully told.

LXXXII

Syne she smiled at the guests, an' said :
'Tak' tent ![1] I rede[2] ye a' tae know
That what I'm tellin' ye's but ae dream—
For 'tis not so, an' 'twas not so.

LXXXIII

'An' I dreamed when I come tae the lands
Whaur Master Fox did bide
There wasna porter at his yett
Nor servin' men inside,
Sae I gaed up tae his ha' door—
An' the door was heich an' wide ;

LXXXIV

'I walkit up tae the aiken door
An' tirlit at the pin,
But Master Fox he didna come
A' for tae let me in.'

LXXXV

Syne she smiled at the guests an' said :
'Tak' tent ! I rede ye a' tae know
That what I'm tellin' ye's but ae dream—
For 'tis not so, an' 'twas not so.'

[1] Tak' tent ! = Take heed !
[2] I rede ye = I warn ye.

LXXXVI

'An' sae I opened the door mysel'—
The door sae heich an' wide,
An' when that I had opened it
I saw anither inside.

LXXXVII

'An' owre this door writ giely well
These words I did behauld—
They gar'd the flesh o' my bodie creep—
Be bold but not too bold.'

LXXXVIII

Syne she smiled at the guests an' said:
'Tak' tent! I rede ye a' tae know
That what I'm tellin' ye's but ae dream—
For 'tis not so, an' 'twas not so.

LXXXIX

'Syne I went intae the mirk toom ha'
An' there I did behauld—
Writ aboon the stey stane stair—
Be bold but not too bold.

XC

'Syne I dreamed that I clam the stair
An' there I did behauld—
Writ giely owre ae gallerie—
Be bold but not too bold.

XCI

'An' on I went tae ae chammer door
An' there I did behauld—
Be bold be bold but not too bold
Lest that your heart's blude should rin cold.'

XCII

Syne she smiled at the guests an' said:
'Tak' tent! I rede ye a' tae know
That what I'm tellin' ye's but ae dream—
For 'tis not so, an' 'twas not so.

XCIII

'Syne I dreamed that I went tae the door
An' tirlit at the pin,
At last I got it opened wide
An' straight I walkit in.

XCIV

'An' there saw sic ae loathlie sight
I scant could trew my eyes,
An' my face did thraw, at what I saw,
An' I cried out elrish cries!'

XCV

But Master Fox smiled at the guests—
'She's tellin' ae dream she redes us know,
For 'tis not so, nor 'twas not so,
An' indeed God forbid it should be so!'

XCVI

'An' there I did see skeletons,
Skeletons bare, an' three or mair,
An' tubs o' blude, an' four ladies—
New-slain—a' hangin' by their hair!

XCVII

'Syne I ca'ed on the Haly Name,
An' on the Haly Trinitie,
An' doon the stey stane stairs I rin
As fast as I could dri'e.'

XCVIII

But Master Fox smiled at the guests—
'She's tellin' ae dream she redes us know,
For 'tis not so, an' 'twas not so,
An' indeed God forbid it should be so!'

XCIX

But the lairds an' ladies didna heed
The young laird Fox sae free an' fair,
They waited the neist frae Ladie Mary
An' the ladies gay were channerin' sair.

C

'Syne I dreamed as I rin the stair
I lookit out o' ae windae hee,
An' there I saw *you*, Master Fox,
Comin' owre the fields wi' ae young ladie!

CI

'An' the ladie didna walk by your side,
Nor yet ahin, nor yet afare,
But *you* were pu'in' her after *you*—
Grippit by her lang black hair,
An' fu' o' fear I scurrit doon
An' hurked below the stair.'

CII

But Master Fox smiled at the guests—
'She's tellin' ae dream she redes us know,
For 'tis not so, an' 'twas not so,
An' indeed God forbid it should be so!'

CIII

'An' syne I dreamed wi' monys ae mane
That *you* draggit in the young ladie,
An' cried: "I've slain seven ladies fair—
The eight ane ye sall be!"

CIV

'An' the fair ladie she did ca' out
Fu' loudly on the Haly Name,
An' on the Haly Persons Three,
But help it never came.

CV

'In through the door *you* draggit her
A' by her lang black hair,
An' owre the stanes *you* draggit her
An' up the stey stane stair.'

CVI

But Master Fox smiled at the guests—
'She's tellin' ae dream she redes us know,
For 'tis not so, an' 'twas not so,
An' indeed God forbid it should be so!'

CVII

'I dreamed *you* pu'ed her up the stair
Wi' mickle grunt an' mane,
An' at the stairway bannister
She clutched wi' might an' main.

CVIII

'But *you* drawed out your gude braid-sword,
An' swung it giely well,
An' *you* hacked off the ladie's hand,
An' doon the stairs it fell.

CIX

'Doon stairs the bludie hand it fell—
It was ae loathlie sight tae see—
It fell beside me, I picked it up
An' fled as fast as I might flee.'

CX

But Master Fox smiled at the guests—
'She's tellin' ae dream she redes us know,
For 'tis not so, an' 'twas not so,
And indeed God forbid it should be so!'

CXI

Syne hooly, hooly,[1] the ladie rose
An' on her feet did stand,
An' in the twinklin' o' an e'e
Drew forth the ladie's wallow't[2] *hand!*

CXII

An' tae the guests she cried aloud:
'This wasna dream I'd hae ye know,'
An' she held the deid hand out tae them—
'*For here I hae the hand tae show!*'

[1] Hooly, hooly = slowly, slowly; deliberately.

[2] Wallow't = withered; shrivelled.

CXIII

An' the lairds hae drawed their gude
braid-swords
An' striped [1] the villan's white bodie,
Ane hunner times they striped his bouk,[2]
A' frae his suire [3] doon tae his thie.[4]

CXIV

An' the brithers hae drawed their gude
braid-swords
An' swung them giely well,
An' they hae stabbit the fause laird Fox
Till his blude in spaits [5] it fell,
His bodie's gang out tae the back dung-pit,
An' his sowl's gang doon tae Hell.

* * * * *

CXV

An' monys ae gude laird's ladie gay
His blude got owre her claithes an' shoon,
But I wot that he will murder na mair
When cock-crows chase the ghostlie
moon.

[1] Striped = stabbed.
[2] Bouk = the trunk of the body.
[3] Suire = neck. [4] Thie = thigh.
[5] Spaits = torrents.

CXVI

An' hame far frae the green countrie
The Ladie Mary's gang awa'
Back tae her fether an' mither dear,
Wi' her gude brithers twa.

THE BALLAD OF LAIRD GILLIE

I

'O FETHER dear, O fether dear,
My claithes an' shoon are thin,
Owre woods an' vales, owre glens an' dales,
The lang lang night I've rin,
Sae gar your wightly [1] men come doon
An' let your daughter in!

II

'O gar your mudie [2] servin' men
Wham you pay meat an' fee,
Rise frae their sleep, an' ope your yett—
Your yett sae wide an' hee—
An' tak' me in, for I hae rin,
Till I am like tae dee.'

[1] Wightly = active.
[2] Mudie = stalwart; strong.

III

'O dauchter dear, O dauchter dear,
Is't moonbeams on each wa' ?
Or is't the light o' torches set
Wi'in our bigly[1] ha'
That gars ye look sae ghastlie white
As ye wad sweine an' fa' ? '

IV

''Tis na the light o' moonbeams bright
Upon your keep's braid wa',
'Tis na the flare o' torch's glare
Wi'in your bigly ha',
That gars me look sae ghastlie white
As I wad sweine an' fa'.

V

'But oh, it's I am like tae dee
Wi' mickle fear an' woe—
Laird Gillie wed me yester-morn,
Tae his hame I did go,
We rade a' yester-day an' night
Till first cocks 'gan tae crow.

[1] Bigly = handsome; well decorated.

VI

'Then it's up an' sang ae bonny bird
That sate upon ae tree:
"I wadna wend na farther thro' the glens
Wi' Laird Gillie,
I wadna tak' anither step
For fear he'd gar me dee!"

VII

'I didna heed the bonny bird
That sang sae eerilie,
But rade fast thro' the mirk mirk wood,
Laird Gillie side o' me,
He'd ta'en me for his wedded wife
An' wadna gar me dee.

VIII

'An' on we rade an' better rade
Till darkest hour 'fare dawn,
When front o' me I plain did see
Ae ladie pale an' wan,
Frae her white throat—in spaits[1]—the blood
Fell doon her claithes upon.

[1] In spaits = in torrents.

IX

'Laird Gillie shrieked! our gude steeds screaned
An' snorted fearfullie!
"My sire was laird o' castels nine,
My mither ladie o' three,
But he wham you hae wedded come
An' frae my hame stole me!

X

'*"He kept me here, ae prisoner,*
I bore him bairnies three—
But I was maiden nane, nor wife,
An' sae he murdered me;
Win up! [1] *Back tae your ha', for he*
Maun bide this night wi' me!"

XI

'An' fause Laird Gillie's men they fled,
As fast as they could dri'e!
Nane bided but the bludie ghost,
An' Laird Gillie, an' me;
In yon mirk wood—he lies stark dead!
Sae I've rin hame tae ye.

[1] Win up = hurry; haste away.

XII

'O fether dear, O fether dear,
My claithes an' shoon are thin,
Owre woods an' vales, owre glens an' dales,
The lang lang night I've rin—
Sae gar my mither mak' my bed,
For health I'll never win!'

XIII

'O dauchter dear, O dauchter dear,
Is't moonbeams on each wa'?
Or is't the light o' torches set
Wi'in our bigly ha'
That gars ye look sae ghastlie white
As ye wad sweine an' fa'?'

XIV

''Tis na the light o' moonbeams bright
Upon your keep's braid wa',
'Tis na the flare o' torch's glare
Wi'in your bigly ha',
But in my ear I still can hear
My laird's last screechin' ca'!'

IRISH BALLADS

THE WAIL OF THE MADWOMAN

(*Brown's Bay, Islandmagee, Co. Antrim,* A.D. 1798.)

I

My love lived in Eire, an' sang blithlie
As he carried stones from a craggy hill,
Tae build a wee house for him an' me,
By the side o' a sleepy croonin' rill
In a leafy glen that was cool an' still.

II

Far from him, in Alba, nigh Ective's wave,
I pieced quilts tae cover my love an' me;
An' sang all day, thankin' God who gave
So comely a man—my own love tae be,
An' whose passionate heart throbbed but for me.

III

He sent me a message tae cross the sea,
Our home was all ready, his work was o'er,
I sailed—I longed in his arms tae be!
But naebody met me on Eire's shore,
So I wandered on till his cabin door.

IV

But the wee house he'd built was blazin' red!
An' high, from the branch o' an oul' pine tree
Swung my dear love,—he was stark an' dead!
An' his poor glassy eyes stared straight at me,
So I laughed—wi' the Yeos—right heartilie!

A BALLAD OF A POSTHUMOUS CHILD

(*Ballynahinch, Co. Down*, A.D. 1798.)

I

THEY brought him home tae me—coul' dead!
Wrapped in a ketch-sail shroudin' sheet,
That hardly hid his blood-smeared head,
That didnae hide his danglin' feet.

II

I clinched my teeth an' niver spoke,
Nor naethin' heerd, nor naethin' saw,
But jist the dead Thing that the folk
Put doon upon the truckle-straw.

III

They gathered roond the truckle-bed
An' sthripped the sheet off, tenderly,
An' here an' there 'twas soakin' red—
An ugly loathsome sight tae see.

IV

For long beside his corpse I stood,
I mouthed nae moans, I dhropped nae tears,
Jist watched the wee thin sthreams o' blood
Ooze from his nose, an' mouth, an' ears ;

V

An' marked upon his strong brown throat
The gallows-rope's blue livid weal,
His clammy shirt, his ball-torn coat,
His tight-clinched hands—still held in steel.

VI

They said—' They sthrangled him, at first
An' then, whin he was jist half-dead,
The Redcoats stood an' laughed, an' cursed,
An' filled his body wi' their lead.'

VII

I heerd their talk, but niver spoke,
Jist held my husband's stiffened hands,
As some man-neighbour filed an' broke
From off his wrists the coul' steel bands.

VIII

An' then I sthripped an' washed him white,
I combed an' dhressed his curly hair,
An' closed his eyes so glazed an' bright
That gaped wi' sich a sickenin' glare;

IX

I bound his ball-torn breast wi' bands,
An' wrapped him in a clean cool sheet,
I twined his prayer-beads roond his hands
An' set a rushlight at his feet.

X

An' then, whin all these things was done,
I set me in a sugan chair,
An' watched by him—but made nae moan,
Nor dhropped nae tear, nor mouthed nae prayer.

XI

There's nae sowl kens the raison why
I kept so still, dhry-eyed, an' dumb,
Although I longed tae schreech an' cry—
'Twas thinkin' o' the wean tae come!

XII

My husband's dead two months ago—
It seems a far far longer time—
An' quiet, dhry-eyed, still I go,
For it's gie near my childin'-prime.

XIII

I pray the Lord Christ — night an' morn—
My butchered husband's wean may be
A man-child, strong an' sturdy born,
An' comely shaped, an' fair tae see.

XIV

An' if He heeds the prayer I pray,
If from my flesh there comes a man,
I'll feed an' suck him well, each day,
An' rear him wantin' blame or ban.

XV

An' from these breasts he'll suckle well
The hate my black broke heart does keep,
A hate as fierce as flamey Hell,
An' deep as hell's red pit is deep.

XVI

An' from he's fit tae tak' his feet
I'll bring from thon oul' cupboard-draw'r
An' show him, iv'ry day, the sheet,
The blood-smeared clothes his father wore.

XVII

I'll tell him how his sire was killed,
An' how—whin only jist half-dead—
The Redcoats stood, an' laughed, an' filled
His squirmin' body wi' their lead;

XVIII

An' how the kindly neighbours come
An' brought him wi' them, in a sheet,
An' how I first saw—horror-dumb—
His lollin' head, his danglin' feet;

XIX

An' how wild-eyed, an' numb I stood,
An' made nae moans, an' dhropped nae tears,
Jist watched the wee thin sthreams o' blood
Ooze from his nose, an' mouth, an' ears.

XX

An' marked upon his strong brown throat
The gallows-rope's blue livid weal,
His clammy shirt, his ball-torn coat,
His stiffened hands held tight in steel.

XXI

So now ye ken the raison why
I kept so still, dhry-eyed, an' dumb,
Although I longed tae rave an' cry,
'Twas thinkin' o' the wean tae come!

XXII

Oh! if Christ heeds the prayer I pray
If from my flesh there comes a man—
I'll feed an' suck him well, each day,
An' rear him wantin' blame or ban.

XXIII

An' from these breasts he'll suckle well
The hate my black broke heart does keep,
A hate as fierce as flamey Hell,
An' deep as hell's red pit is deep.

A REBEL'S WIFE

(*Kilroot, Co. Antrim*, A.D. 1798.)

I WAS roped, an' gagged, an' cudnae speak,
O my heart an' sowl wi' loathin' filled
As my brither's wife—nae blush on her cheek—
Standin' furnenst the bedroom door
Spoke tae the Captain o' the Yeos, who'd killed
Her husband, a while afore.

An' worse! her laughin' filled all the place,
She spat on my brither's stiffenin' face!
An', great God! she lifted her curly head—
Kissed the Yeoman's beardless lips, an' said:
'I hated him, an' he hated me,
I'm glad ye killed him, I'm glad he's dead,
An' I thank ye well, my purty boy,
An' I'll tak' ye tae his bed wi' me.'

The soldier's eyes flashed wi' an evil joy,
An' leerin', he wint tae the door, an' said
Tae the searjent waitin' there—'March on!
Tae Carrick, I'll join ye there, at dawn.'
Then they wint in—tae the dead man's bed.

Christ in Heaven! the ropes I tried tae burst!
An' her sowl tae the pits o' hell I curst!
Till all o' a suddent I heerd loud shrieks
That paled my struggle-reddened cheeks,
Then the room door opened—*alone*, she stood,
A shearin' hook in her hand, all blood!
Warm blood, that I heerd drippin' tae the floor;
For nae sound come, now, from beyont the door!

THE RETURN OF THE YOUNGEST-BORN

(*Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim*, A.D. 1798.)

I

I'VE watched for ye, since the sun wint doon
Tae rest ower the Knocka Hill,
An' where hae ye been tae, my bonny boy!
An' came aught tae ye ill?

I've watched for ye, since the goolden moon
Rose up ower the dark-gray sea,
An' where hae ye been tae, my bonny boy!
An' has aught come wrang tae ye?

Ye shudnae hae left me here, m'lone,
Wi' your sister an' sister's chile
An' they lyin' dead, in the corner bed,
An' me cryin' all the while!

II

Ye shudnae hae worried, mither dear,
  Whin the sun sunk doon tae rest—
I stood wi' my foot on the Yeoman's neck,
  My father's pike in his breast!

Ye shudnae hae worried, mither dear,
  Whin the moon rose ower the sea—
I dug a grave an' buried him deep
  An' I laughed wi' an evil glee!

So he'll prowl at nights wi' his Yeos
    nae more,
  Nor hae wi' our women his will a
    spell—
He sent two angels tae Heaven the day,
  An' I sent one fiend tae Hell!

ENGLISH BALLADS

THE BALLAD OF ADEELA

I

The minstrel stood without the postern gate,
The castle loomed dark 'gainst a lilac sky;
He sang—'Adeela, here alone I wait,
Come, sweet! the night's love-hours are sweeping by.'

II

The sentinels within the castle's keep—
Knowing their liege long-since the youth had lain—
Crossed themselves, and in tones low and deep,
Murmured 'Lord Jesu' o'er and o'er again.

III

A haunting song of mingled joy and grief
A nightingale trilled from a neigh-
b'ring tree,
Adeela cried—' Bird, let thy song be brief,
Thou can'st not vie with my love's
lutany ! '

IV

Then left her room—bright as a young
moon's beam—
And crept like moon-beam down the
turret stair,
Threw wide the gate, and stood with eyes
agleam,
But lo ! the minstrel was not waiting
there.

V

For long she listened nigh the open gate,
From mid the distant shadows came
a cry—
' Adeela, here alone for thee I wait,
Come, sweet ! the night's love-hours are
sweeping by.'

VI

She heard her loved one's longing call again,
And fleet as hawthorn bloom by June-wind blown,
She sped across the meadows to a glen—
Wherein was reared a simple marble stone.

VII

Stretched on his grave, she wept a little space,
And tore the white flow'rs she had planted there,
Then in among them hid her wan white face
And cursed her father in her wild despair!

VIII

Her grim sire's men searched hill, and dale, and lawn,
His heralds cried in sleeping village mart,
They found her in the glen, at red of dawn,
But cold her brow and still her passionate heart.

* * * * *

IX

And still—the good folk say—without the gate,
When loom the dark towers 'gainst a lilac sky,
They hear—'Adeela, here alone I wait,
Come, sweet! the night's love-hours are sweeping by.'

X

And many a prayer they offer for her soul,
That from her sorrows Christ may set her free
And grant their twain hearts rest, while ages roll,
And quiet thus—the ghostly lutany.

AN OLD ENGLISH SONG ENDED

I

How should I your true love know
From another one?—
By his cockle-hat, and staff,
And his sandal-shoon.

II

By his cloak of silver grey
My true love thou'lt know,
And his doublet stained, once white,
White as mountain snow.

III

By his face so wondrous fair,
And his lofty brow—
Mayhap hidden in brown curls—
Thou'lt know him, I'll trow.

IV

How should I your true love know
From another one?—
By his cockle-hat, and staff,
And his sandal-shoon.

V

By his face so wondrous fair,
Calm, serene, and sweet,
By his delicate white hands,
And his bleeding feet.

VI

Thus his wraith stood nigh my bed,
Yesternight, alone,
Thus my true love thou wilt know,
From another one!

SOME PRESS OPINIONS

ON

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